

Sanders Ferry Bridge
Savannah River, State Highway 184
Anderson County
South Carolina

HAER No. SC-2

W. L. R.
8x
4-2-1961
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SANDERS FERRY BRIDGE
HAER SC-2

Location: Across the Savannah River between Anderson County, South Carolina and Elbert County, Georgia. Georgia State Highway 368 and South Carolina State Highway 184.

UTM: 17.339245.3791685
Quad: Iva

Date of Construction: 1927

Present Owner: Georgia DOT and South Carolina DOT

Present Use: Vehicular Bridge

Significance: The Sanders Ferry Bridge was built jointly by Elbert County, Georgia and Anderson County, South Carolina. Built by the Austin Bridge Company of Atlanta, the Anderson-Elberton Free Bridge was formally opened March 17, 1927, as the Sanders Ferry Bridge. It established an important transportation link across the Savannah River on the Cotton Belt Highway from Anderson, South Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida. The bridge exhibits important features of the "American System" of pin connections.

Historian: John P. Johnson, September 1980

SANDERS FERRY BRIDGE

In June 1920, stockholders subscribed to a \$100,000 bridge building corporation under the leadership of W.T.A. Sherrard of Iva, South Carolina. Sherrard proposed to set a steel bridge across the Savannah River at Sanders Ferry between Anderson County, South Carolina, and the Gaines District in Elbert County, Georgia.¹ Sherrard's corporation did not realize its goal, however, as the citizens of the area desired to erect a non-toll bridge over the river.

In January 1925, the New York-Atlanta Highway Bridge Company at Iva, South Carolina, secured War Department approval for the toll bridge, an important link in the proposed Cotton Belt Highway. At this time, the War Department was also considering a bridge at Cherokee Ferry near Heardmont, Georgia, and the Calhoun Highway's proposed bridge site at Burton's Ferry near Johnsontown, Georgia.

In April 1925, Anderson County Commissioners suggested a non-toll bridge so that Alford's Bridge (1917) and the Smith-McGee Bridge (1922) could be avoided. In August 1925, Elbert County voters approved a \$61,000 bridge bond for two steel bridges across the Savannah. Elbert County's contribution was \$36,000 for the proposed bridge at Sanders Ferry and \$25,000 for the proposed bridge at Burton's Ferry in Abbeville County. Anderson County voters approved a \$36,000 bridge bond to match the sum approved in Elbert County for the Sanders Ferry Bridge. An agreement was made between the two counties and the Sanders Ferry Bridge was put out for bid in March 1926. The Austin Bridge company of Atlanta, Georgia, submitted the lowest bid at \$84,000. Since a total of only \$72,000 had been committed to the bridge by Elbert and Anderson Counties, the Austin Bridge Company was asked to rebid without the cost of installing flooring. The counties agreed to cover the cost of pine stock planking for the road deck.³

In April 1926, ground was broken for the bridge approach on the Georgia bank. While the bridge was under construction in October, W.T.A. Sherrard, Anderson County Commissioner, walked across the bridge. Sherrard announced that four new roads leading to the site from Iva, Abbeville, Anderson and Lowndesville were nearly completed on the South Carolina side.

In February 1927, the third span for the present Camelback Truss bridge was swung into place, while the painting had begun and the flooring was being laid on the other two spans. The total cost was estimated at approximately \$90,000. The Anderson-Elberton Free Bridge was opened on March 17, 1927, and was named the Sanders Ferry Bridge. An important transportation link was established across the Savannah on the Cotton Belt Highway from Anderson, South Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida.⁵

The present structure is a three span pin-connected Camelback through truss bridge. Each truss is 161' long, 19' wide, and is supported on reinforced concrete piers founded on bedrock in the Savannah River. The approach spans are 75' long. The total length of the bridge is 955', and it exhibits important features of the "American System" of pin connections. The asphalt road deck is in poor condition and the future of the bridge is uncertain.

¹Elberton Star, January 13, June 1, 1920.

²Ibid. January 17, 27, 1925.

³Ibid. April 7, 27, August 28, 1925; January 8, March 5, 1926.

⁴Ibid. April 16, October 12, 1926.

⁵Ibid. February 1, 25, March 18, 1927.